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SPEECH

by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

at the inaugural meeting
of the extraordinary session
of the People's Assembly

October 16, 1973

Cairo — Arab Republic of Egypt

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SPEECH

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In the name of God,

Brothers and sisters,

I would have liked to come to you before now to meet with you and with the masses of our people and our nation, but my preoccupations were of the kind you know about and forever wished for me. I am confident that you appreciate and understand them. However, I felt that you were with me in every opinion I formed, that you, our people and our nation, were with me in every decision I took. All of you were with me in every responsibility I have undertaken as an expression of the will of a nation and the destiny of a people.

I found it fitting to come to you today to speak to you, to the masses of our people, to the peoples of our Arab nation and before a world concerned with what occurs on our territory because it is closely connected with the most dangerous causes of humanity, namely, the cause of war and peace, for we do not consider our patriotic and national struggle as a local or regional phenomenon. For the area in which we live, with its civilisation, its strategic

role, is situated in the very heart of the world, and in the midst of its action. Because these are major events, since developments are successive and decisions fateful, I would like to deal directly with what I want to talk to you about. I will concentrate on two major points : war and peace.

First, war. I do not think you expect me to stand in front of you in order that we may boast together about what we have realised in eleven days ; the most dangerous, magnificent and glorious days of history. Perhaps the day will come when we will sit together, not to glorify and boast, but to remember, to study and teach our children and grandchildren and the successive generations the story of our struggle, the bitterness and sufferings of defeat and the sweet taste of victory and its hope.

The day will come when we shall recount what each of us has done in his position, and how each one bore his trust, and played his role, how the heroes of this people and this nation went out in a dark, pitch-black period carrying the torches of light, pointing out the road so that their nation can cross the bridge between despair and hope. The time for all this will come. I am sure that you agree with me that we have preoccupations and responsibilities to which we should devote all our time and exert all our efforts.

If we were to pause for a while, though I know that you are eager to hear many things, I would state the following :

First : As regards myself, I have tried to fulfil the pledge I made before God and before you exactly three years ago. I have pledged before God and before you that the liberation of the patriotic and national soil is the first commitment I have made in loyalty to our people and to the nation. I have pledged before God and before you that I shall spare no effort and shall not hesitate before any sacrifice whatever it may cost me, so that the nation may reach a position in which it is able to raise its determination to the level of its aspirations. I have always believed and will always believe, that aspirations without determination are a form of day-dreaming which my love of, and loyalty to this homeland refuse that we become victims of its mirage or lose ourselves in its fog. I have pledged before God and before you to prove to the world that the 1967 setback was an exception in our history, and not a rule. This emanated from my belief in our history that has extended over 7 thousand years of civilisation, looking forward to horizons which I was positive the struggle of our people and nation will attain and reach confirming their great values and dreams.

I pledged before God and before you that our generation will not hand over their flags to the succeeding generation hanging at half mast or humiliated ; we shall deliver hoisted banners on dignified flag-staffs, though they may be wet with blood. We have kept our heads raised high in the sky while our foreheads were bleeding pain, blood and bitterness.

I pledged before God and before you not to delay or advance from the propitious moment ; not to venture nor to loiter. The calculations were exhausting and the responsibility enormous. But I was aware, as I have often reiterated to you and to the nation, that such was my destiny and that I bore it willingly.

I pledged before God and before you and I faithfully tried to fulfil my promise seeking God's help and asking for your trust and that of the nation. I thank God.

Second : Everything was dependent upon the determination of the nation ; the volume and depth of that determination.

We could not have done anything and nobody could have done anything had it not been for these people and this nation.

The night was long and oppressive, but the nation never doubted that the day would dawn. I say

without presumption that history shall record on behalf of this nation, that its setback was not a fall but merely a short-lived stumble ; that its movement was not effervescence but a lofty rise. Our nation exerted boundless efforts, gave unlimited sacrifice and manifested unending consciousness and awareness.

But more important than all this, greater than effort, sacrifice and awareness : the people kept their boundless faith. This was the dividing line between setback and defeat.

I was aware of this from the very first day when I assumed my responsibilities. I willingly accepted what God laid on my shoulders, I knew that the faith of the people was the base. If the base was intact, all that was lost could be recovered. The ground we had lost, we could spring up from once more.

Despite the many aspects, some of which were natural and others artificial, on account of the psychological warfare launched against us, I kept on asking myself and others, every day : Is the base intact ?

I was confident that no psychological warfare, however fierce, could affect the solidity of this base

As long as the base was sound, all would be well, and everything else would only be a storm in a tea-cup.

I do not deny that we faced many difficulties, real difficulties in services, in supply, in production, and also in political action. I knew the truth but I was not in a position to explain it. I knew that we were trying to make life acceptable to people, and at the same time we had to prepare for what could happen. I was also certain that the day will come when the truth would become clear to others as it had been to me. And when the truth became clear, people would understand and appreciate — and I thank God.

Third : There were clear-cut indications of a split in the conscience of the entire Arab nation. I considered this natural due to ideological and social reasons which were aggravated by the bitterness of the setback. There were those who asked me and asked themselves : Can the nation face this difficult test in this state of disruption in its conscience ? I used to say that this disruption, apart from its natural reasons, reflected a contradiction between reality and hope; and there is nothing to fear thereof. Moreover, I always believed that there could be no remedy or rest for the conscience of the nation except when it confronted the moment of challenge.

Sometimes I was not ready to enter into useless discussions as to whether we should get rid of this disruption first and then confront the challenge, or whether we should accept the challenge in spite of these signs of disruption.

My reply was that nations could not reveal themselves and prove their mettle except through the practice of struggle.

The awareness of a nation and its discovery of its capacities are commensurate with the size of the challenges it meets.

I do not deny that social and ideological differences exist. This is the course of the movement of history. But in the meantime I knew that when great nations confront major challenges, they are capable of setting their priorities with the utmost clarity.

I fervently believed in the soundness and solidity of the call to Arab nationalism. I was aware of the various reactions which moved the course of a nation. But I was confident that unity of action would impose itself on all forces, all secrets, and all currents as they would all realise that this event is not a contest between their individual efforts, but a struggle between the extermination and the survival of an entire nation, and I thank God.

Fourth : I knew well the mettle of our Armed Forces. My talk about them was not a forecast or a prophesy. I came out of the ranks of these Forces and have experienced their traditions. I had the honour of serving in their ranks and under their banners.

The record of these Forces was magnificent but our enemies, old and new imperialism and world Zionism, concentrated their efforts against this record so as to undermine the faith of the nation in its armour and sword.

I never doubted that the Armed Forces were the victim of the 1967 setback and not its cause.

It was within the power of these Forces to fight, in 1967, with the same courage and valour it fought with today, had its military command at that time not lost its nerve following the blow against our Air Force which Gamal Abdel Nasser had warned of, or had it not issued an order for general withdrawal from Sinai, without Nasser's knowledge.

These Forces were not given the opportunity to fight for the homeland, its honour and soil. They were not defeated by the enemy ; they were exhausted by conditions which gave them no chance to fight.

I participated with Gamal Abdel Nasser in the process of re-constructing the Armed Forces. It was then my destiny to bear the responsibility of carrying on this build-up and assuming their Supreme Command. The Egyptian Armed Forces performed a miracle, by any military standard. They have given themselves completely to their duty and absorbed the whole age in terms of training and arms, science and capability. When I issued my order to them to repulse enemy provocations and curb his arrogance, they proved themselves capable thereof. These Forces, after receiving their orders, have taken the initiative in their hands, taking the enemy by surprise, and, with their quick movement, unbalanced the enemy. I would not be exaggerating if I say that military history will pause for long to examine and study the operation carried out on October 6, 1973 when the Egyptian Armed Forces were able to cross the difficult barrier that the Suez Canal poses, when they stormed the strong Bar-Lev fortifications line and set up bridgeheads on the eastern bank of the Canal after unbalancing the enemy, as I said, in six hours. The risk was enormous and the sacrifices were also great. But, the actual results of the first six-hour battle of our war were magnificent. The enemy lost his balance and remains unbalanced until this moment. The wounded nation

has restored its honour and the political map of the Middle East has been changed. If we say this in dignity — and some dignity is faith — it is our duty to state here in the name of these people and this nation our full confidence in our Armed Forces, in their command which planned, in their officers and soldiers who carried out this plan with fire and blood, in the faith and scientific knowledge of these Armed Forces, in their arms and their ability to make the best use of these arms.

I would like to say briefly that this nation can now feel safe and secure after the period of fear. It is now armed with a shield and sword. I would like to draw your attention to the northern front, where the great Syrian army is engaged in one of the most glorious battles of the Arab nation under the firm and faithful leadership of President Hafez El Assad.

I would like to tell our brothers in the northern front : you have fulfilled your promises, you are the most honourable and faithful of friends, you are brave fighters. You have waged war like real men and shown the perseverance of heroes. It would have been impossible to find companions in arms who could have inspired us with more confidence and more courage than these companions alongside whom

we have the honour of fighting against one common enemy, the enemy of the whole Arab nation.

Together, we were the vanguard of the war ; together we suffered its ferocity and together we paid a very heavy price for it with our blood and our resources. We shall continue fighting, challenging destiny itself, and we shall be accompanied by our brothers who called upon each other to come to the battlefield. We shall all pay in sweat and blood until we reach an objective which we and our nation approve of in this dangerous stage of our continued and connected struggle.

Brothers and sisters,

All this was concerned with war, now we come to peace. When talking of peace we should remember, insomuch as others should not feign to forget, the real reason why our fight broke out. Please allow me to lay down some of these reasons clearly and explicitly before you :

First : We are fighting for the sake of peace — the only peace which is worthy of the name, that is, peace based on justice. Our enemy often talks of peace, but there is a vast difference between the peace of aggression and the peace of justice.

It was David Ben Gurion who laid down for Israel the theory of imposing peace. Peace cannot

be imposed, and any such talk is a threat of waging war or actually waging it. The great error of judgement on the part of our enemy was that he imagined that the force of terrorism could safeguard peace.

Today, and in the battlefield, the futility of this theory has been proved. It has been proved that if it was feasible due to the weakness of others one day, it would be of no use once these people gathered their strength.

I really do not know what David Ben Gurion would have thought had he been in command in Israel today. Would he have been able to understand the nature of history, or would he have remained in a position contrary to history as we see Israel's leadership doing today ?

Peace cannot be imposed, and the *fait accompli* peace cannot stand or last. Peace can only be established on the basis of justice. Peace cannot be imposed by terrorism however ferocious and whatever the arrogance and folly of power may have pictured to the enemy who went very far in both, not only during the last six years, but during the last 25 years, that is, since the Zionist state was established by usurping Palestine.

Today, we would like to ask Israel's leaders, where is the theory of Israeli security which they attempted to apply sometimes by violence and other

times by brute power for twenty-five years. This theory has now been smashed and destroyed.

Our Armed Forces today challenge their military power. Now they are engaged in a long protracted war. They are faced with an attrition we can bear much more than they can. Their depth is exposed if they imagine they are able to intimidate us with threats to the Arab depth. I would like to add, so that they may hear in Israel, that we are not upholders of extermination as they allege. Our Egyptian missiles, of the Zafer type, which can cross Sinai, are now on their pads ready, with one signal, to be fired to the very depths of Israel. We could have, since the first moment of the battle, given the signal and issued the order, particularly since their empty arrogance and conceit has deceived them into more than they can bear. But we realise the responsibility of using certain kinds of weapons and we control ourselves. Yet, they have to remember what I said and still say : an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and depth for depth.

Second : We did not fight in aggression on the land of others. We fought, are fighting and will continue to fight for two purposes :

The first is to recover our lands occupied since 1967.

The second is to find a means to restore and respect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. These are our aims in accepting the dangers of combat. We have accepted them in reaction to intolerable and insufferable provocations. We did not start them. We merely defended ourselves, our lands and our right to freedom and life. Our battle was not for the purpose of aggression but against it.

In our battle we did not violate values and laws approved by the community of nations and stipulated in its Charter which was inscribed by the blood of free nations after their vietory over Fascism and Nazism.

We could well say that our war is the continuation of mankind's war against Fascism and Nazism, since Zionism with its racist doctrine and its logic of expansion through violence and brutality is but a feeble mimicry of Nazism and Fascism which provokes derision and not fear ; deprecation and not hatred.

In our war, we behaved in compliance with the spirit and the letter of the United Nations Charter, not violating them but according to the Charter itself. We behaved in understanding and respect of the resolutions of the international organisation,

whether those of the General Assembly or those of the Security Council.

Brothers and sisters,

The whole world has testified to our right and hailed our courage in defence of this right. The world is now aware that we have not started the aggression but initiated the duty of self-defence. We are not against the values and laws of the international community, we are for them. We are not adventurers in war — we are seekers of peace.

The world is now conscious of all that and before now had sympathised with our cause. Today, in addition to this sympathy there is world respect for our determination to defend this cause. The world's sympathy gave us a feeling of security and now the world's respect makes us proud.

I tell you frankly and honestly that I prefer the world's respect, even without sympathy, to the world's sympathy devoid of respect.

Brothers and sisters,

Only one state differed with the whole world, not only with us but as I say with the whole world, and that is the United States. It claims that it was surprised when we repelled aggression. We do not understand how and why it was surprised. It re-

covered from the shock, but it has not gone back to reason. It is really regrettable that this should be the attitude of one of the super powers in this age. We expected, or maybe we hoped, against all indications and experiences, that the surprise would help the United States to reason correctly. But, unfortunately, this did not happen. We have seen the United States emerge from the surprise to the manoeuvre. Its first offer was to cease fighting and return to the pre-6 October lines. We could have become angry at this reversed logic but we did not become angry because we are confident of ourselves, on the one hand, and want to contribute to establishing world peace, on the other. The world has entered into an era of detente between the two major powers. We are not opposed to the policy of detente, but we had, and still have, one reservation with regard to it. If we want the world, after the impossibility of the outbreak of a world war, to enter into an era of peace, we should bear in mind that peace is not an abstract meaning. Peace has only one meaning, namely that all peoples in the world should feel that it is their peace and not imposed on them.

I would like to say before you and before the world that we want the policy of detente to succeed and be fostered. We are ready to contribute to its success and consolidation ; but we consider, right-

fully, that this cannot take place while aggression is launched against an entire Arab nation strategically situated in the centre of the world and economically in possession of its most important wealth.

Any overlooking of this elementary fact is not only a negligence ; it is an insult which we do not accept for ourselves nor for the world which knows the importance and value of this area in which we live, and it should now know that this area is capable of giving and of depriving.

Brothers and sisters,

The United States following the manoeuvre which we refused to discuss, particularly after having embarked on the path of right through the force of arms has resorted to a polich which neither we, nor our Arab nation, can accept silently. It has set up a quick airlift to carry military aid and assistance to Israel.

It was not enough for the United States that its arms enabled Israel to impede all attempts for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, now it is further involved in that which is more dangerous and more perilous in consequences.

Whereas we are fighting the aggression, whereas we are trying to rid our occupied territories of

its nightmarish quality, it is hastening to the aid of the aggressor, replacing his losses and furnishing him with new equipment. The United States is setting up a naval and air-bridge by means of which it is pouring into Israel new tanks, aeroplanes, guns, rockets and electronic equipment.

We are telling them that this does not frighten us. However, before reaching the point of no return both you and us should ask ourselves this question — where to and until when ? Where to, when wo and not Israel, form the greater part of the Middle East; where to when all your interests are linked with us and not with Israel ?

Brothers and sisters,

I have thought of sending a letter to President Richard Nixon stating our position clearly. However, I hesitated for fear it might be misinterpreted, and instead I have decided to address to him an open message from here. It is a message dictated by confidence and not fear ; stemming not from a weak position but from a real desire to preserve peace and foster the detente.

I would like to tell him that our aims from this war are well known and need no further clarification; and if he would like to know our peace demands then I will put to him our peace project.

First : We have fought and we shall go on fighting to liberate our land which was seized by Israeli occupation in 1967, and to find the means towards the restoration and respect of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In this respect, we accept our commitment to the decisions of the United Nations, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Second : We are prepared to accept a cease-fire on condition that the Israeli forces withdraw forthwith from all the occupied territories to the pre-June 5, 1967 lines, under international supervision.

Third : We are ready, once the withdrawal from all these territories has been carried out, to attend an international peace conference at the United Nations. I shall try to persuade my colleagues, the Arab leaders, who are directly responsible for leading the conflict with our enemy. I will also do my best to convince the representatives of the Palestinian people to participate with us and with the whole international community in laying down rules and measures for peace in the area based on the respect of the legitimate rights of all the peoples of the area.

Fourth : We are willing, at this hour and at

this very moment, to start clearing the Suez Canal and opening it to international navigation so as to contribute, once again, to world welfare and prosperity. I have in fact given the order to the head of the Suez Canal Authority to start this task immediately after the liberation of the eastern bank of the Canal. Preliminary measures have already been taken for the fulfilment of this task.

Fifth : Throughout all this we are not prepared to accept ambiguous promises or flexible expressions which lend themselves to various interpretations, draining our time needlessly and returning our cause to the stalemate which we do not accept any more, whatever the reasons of others may be, or the sacrifices required of us.

What we need now is clarity — clarity in objectives and in means.

Brothers and sisters,

I have said all I had to say, and I sincerely pray to God that all might understand my words in their true perspective, and might judge matters correctly. This present time requires the courage and the brains of men. As for us, we are confronting these hours with the reverence of those who are truthful to God, to themselves and to their humanity. These

hours are witnessing battles greater than any waged with conventional weapons, even in the battles of the giants. These are hours in which destinies will be decided and relationships defined — relationships which will impose themselves on the future while asserting themselves in the present. These are hours in which heroes are advancing and martyrs are ascending. These are hours filled with inter-related feelings, in which the cries of joy are mingled with other deep feelings — in that we wanted and still want justice and not war.

But we demand and continue to claim justice, even if war is imposed upon us.

When the ecstasy of victory filled every heart, between myself and God, I knew the price in human suffering which we had to pay for victory. This is why I followed the news of our victories with reverence — because I know what is war.

For He has taught us that :

«You have been ordained to fight much against your liking».

Brothers and sisters,

In these hours we will know ourselves, our friends and our enemies.

We have known ourselves and we have known our friends who proved to be the most loyal and sincere of friends. We have always known our enemy and we do not wish to add to their number, but have addressed word after word, notification after notification, and warning after warning, to give everyone the chance to review their doings with the hope that they might retract.

But, with the help of God, we are capable, after words, notifications and warnings to deal blow after blow. We shall know when, where and how, if they wish to escalate what they are about.

The entire Arab nation, and I allow myself to speak on its behalf, will not forget the attitudes of these hours. The Arab nation shall not forget the friends of these hours who stand by it, nor will it forget the enemies of these hours who side with its enemy.

God, be our Helper and our Guide,

God bless our nation and our people,

God, thou hast promised and Thy promise is true.

«If ye champion God, He will champion thee and entrench thy footsteps».

God's peace and mercy upon you.

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